

afford it or not. Besides, even supposing he can do so, by being more active, more industrious, or more intelligent, by knowing where to get materials best, and how to make the most of them, yet it cannot be right to deprive him entirely of the advantages which his superior knowledge and abilities should give him, and only to turn them into a means of injuring himself.

Others, again, remove their scruples by saying "we avoid many of the evils of which you complain, by not pledging ourselves to accept the lowest tender." "Is this your practice?" I reply, "then you act unfairly, and make deceitful offers;" for all alike spend their time, and some their money, in preparing estimates, when only one out of the whole number has any chance of remuneration; but, in common equity, their chance should be equal, if the toil and loss are equal. And yet in the face of this, persons who ought to know better, have no scruples about inducing hard-working tradesmen to spend time and money on that which ends in disappointment. Nor let people even attempt to take refuge under such a "saving clause," for it never was intended to give a liberty of choice out of respectable tenders, but only as a security against bankrupts, and men otherwise notoriously unequalled; and if a man offers to enter into the specified conditions, it is dishonourable to refuse the lowest merely because you like to employ another: the builder comes as to a gentleman, expecting to be treated fairly and openly, and if he is not, he goes away justly discontented and dissatisfied; the more so if to this unfairness has been added the injustice of acting thus in the case of a private personal invitation to submit a tender.

IV.

I will offer a slight sketch of the rise and popularity of this system, adding a few remarks on the ancient mode of building as compared with our own.

Several causes have combined to make public competition popular. The two chief are: 1.—That it is such a very easy way of getting at what is considered a fair estimate; and 2.—It is a means of finding out the "cheapest man" to do the work. These, perhaps, are the main reasons why those who build, adopt and perpetuate this system. But there are many persons, not so directly concerned, who give it a helping hand. For instance, it may often be the interest of the architect to recommend this plan, and that it is so may be the fault of those who employ him. The motive of the architect in this, is to prevent the contract from exceeding his estimate, and he is sometimes influenced by causes over which he has no control; such, for example, as the following: Mr. E. says to Mr. A., "I want a house, but my means are limited: what accommodations can I have for this sum? This is something of the plan I should like, with the size of the rooms and a few other memoranda for your guidance. Can it be done for this sum?" "Yes, Mr. E.," replies the architect, "I dare say it can, I will make out a sketch and see." The sketch comes, and the estimate (so far as Mr. A. can tell, without having made out the detail drawings) comes fully up to the amount specified. One or two improvements are then suggested. "This room should be a trifle higher,—that passage a trifle wider,—this dimension is not quite so large as I proposed," &c. "But, Mr. E.," suggests the poor embarrassed architect, "you must remember that your sum is limited, and will barely cover the expense as it is." "Well then, Mr. A.," is the rejoinder, "I should like two or three of these little things done: you must see what you can do for me." And so the drawings and specifications are made out, and in order to get it at all down to the amount required, recourse must be had to competition. But without these incitements, the architect may make his estimate too low: so, whichever way it is, competition must be sought.

Now men are very fond of telling us we must not plod in the ways of our forefathers; that they were easy-going, and slow, and plodding and the like, but that this will not suit our case. We have seen the contrast

between this and the last generation of builders. Let us now see how matters were managed two or three centuries back. In those days, we find, that if men had not money enough to complete their buildings, they used to leave a wing or a portion unfinished till they had; or else they were satisfied with what their funds would allow them. I suppose they made their plans, and determined exactly what accommodation they wanted, nee'd up their money as far as it would go, and then waited till they could get more. They did not aint themselves in scantling of timber, in thickness of wall, or pitch of roof.—Their care was to have substantial and durable buildings, and they had them, and this is the cause why so many of their works have come down to posterity. It is true that though we have abundant specimens of public buildings of different kinds, we have not so many remains of mediæval houses. The reason of this seems to be, that most of the ordinary houses were built of timber, and they have been destroyed by fire; for, before the Great Fire of London, more than half the city was composed of ancient timber houses: and still through the country, and in some old towns, as Chester, York, Bristol, &c., there are abundant proofs of it. But many houses of our day, built within this very half-century, are already almost in need of renovation.

Now in the modes of building used from the very earliest ages, one existed without intermission, so far as we can learn, up to the rise of this generation of builders: I mean the confinement of one branch of mechanical art to one man. There were no such beings in old times as "builders," in our sense of the word. They were master-masons, master-carpenters, master-glaziers, and the like. One man did not undertake every kind of work: he devoted himself to his own department: all his energies were concentrated in it: it absorbed all his interests, and he was perfect master of it. But now one man takes everything, no matter what. He says he cannot keep to the trade he was brought up to: it is not enough to support him: and this leads him to this general, and superficial, and really untradesmanlike system.

And in considering this past, another great difference, and not less striking, encounters us,—the total absence of competition. Our forefathers had it not. They lived and prospered, and there seems to be no reason why we should not do the same. They entered into contracts. But they did not enter into them in the blind way in which men of our day have done of late years. Their contracts were quite as binding as ours, and they had to find large securities for their fulfilment. In the indentures for building King's College Chapel, Cambridge, we find that the contractors took each item separately, and did not run the whole into one lumping sum; the money to be advanced on each item being also accurately specified: thus, for instance, we read "and for the good and sure performing of all these premises, as is afore specified, the said Provost and Scolers covenanten and granten to pay unto the said John Wastell" (the King's master-mason) "for the performing of every buttresse 61L. 13s. 4d., which amounteth for all the said buttresses 140L., and for the performing of the said tower 100L. to be paid in forme following; That is to say, from tyme to tyme as moche money as shall suffice to pay the masons and other laborers ratly after the numbre of workmen; and also for stone at suche tymes," &c.: "provided alway that the said John Wastell shall kepe continually 60 fre-masons working upon the said works; and in case any mason or other labourer shall be found unproffitable, or of any suche ylle demeaner whereby the work shall be hyndered, or the company mysordered, not doing their duties accordingly as they ought to doo, then the said surveyor to indover hymself to perform them by such wayes as hath byn there used before this tyme." Then he was to find iron work for the pinnacles to the value of 5s. each, and any more that was required to be used, he was "to bere hyt at his own cost and charge."

Then it seems they had more than a mere drawing from which to estimate the several items, for the "fynnyalls to be well and workmanly wrought, made, and sett up after the best handelynge and form of good workmanship, according to the fynnyalls of oon-buttresse which is wrought and sett up," &c. And in the glazier's work, "Richard Bonnde," and others, are to find "stand glass with imagery" at 16d. per foot, and lead at 2d. per foot, equal to a specimen referred to, then put up. By this means they were able to tell exactly what the work was to be, and could therefore estimate so much the more accurately. In the present day the estimate is often actually guessed by several of those who tender. Nor is this to be wondered at, when we take into consideration the useless labour they might incur; and this is one reason why we see such an immense difference between the several tenders for the same work. In fact it then becomes a kind of lottery. Alas, I fear me that though this age calls itself an "enlightened" one, and calls all its predecessors "dark," yet we have both to learn and unlearn, before we stand even on a level with our forefathers in many kinds of prudence and wisdom.

I fear by this time I have wearied my readers, but my deep sense of the magnitude of the evil which I have described, will, I trust, with the earnest at least, plead my excuse: and I would only ask this further favour of them, that if at any time they should be called upon to build, especially if that building be sacred, they will make it a matter of conscience to inquire what mode of effecting this object will be least injurious to the temporal and eternal interests of others; for surely it must be a sort of sacrilege to build upon the loss, or spiritual hurt, of our fellow Christians.*

MEMS. OF NEW YORK AND BOSTON.

In New York it appears that there are hundreds of streets of unoccupied third and fourth stories—levels which, in France or England, would be populously inhabited. There are long blocks of houses, in every part of up-town, through which run uninterrupted lines of floors unoccupied. And yet the crying want of New York is for elegant private lodgings. Mr. N. P. Willis says, as to this, in *The Home Journal*, "The pride of the dwellers in tall houses requires that they should have the front door to themselves—also the door plate and bell-handle—also freedom from other people's sub-barrel on the sidewalk edge—also the right of entry and staircase, privacy of basement, and exclusive control of gas, Croton, and night-key. These (with fashionable neighbourhood) constitute the actual and tangible advantages of a 'house up-town.' And we propose to continue these, one and all, to the present enjoyers of them—proposing only a better use of their superfluous upper stories thus:—Of every five houses in a block, let the central one be taken by a landlady of lodgings. The main floor and basement might be occupied as a restaurant and cook-shop. The other rooms she would let to those who should agree with her for an annual rent, paying also for regular service, and for the meals she should furnish. Of her neighbours on either side she should hire the upper stories, opening an access to them from the central house, and sealing up the staircases, so as to cut off all communication with the families below. In this way, an entry, run through the entire block, would be like the long wing of a hotel; and this appropriation of it, known only to the occupants, would be no manner of inconvenience to the private residences whose doors and staircases were left undisturbed."

The same writer says, touching intended visitors to London:—"Letters of introduction are in great demand, and, in fact, some substitute for these fancy-claims upon attention and hospitality is very much needed. Now that European travellers are coming over in considerable numbers, could not a bureau of exchange, in such matters, be opened in New York—giving checks for dinners

* In Contracting with Builders and Others, Beware! of a Few Words to any who are about to Build." London: Longman.